

RESOLUTION DESIGNATING IDAHO PRO BONO WEEK – 2014

WHEREAS, we are a nation dedicated to “liberty and justice for all,” and equal justice and the fair administration of justice are fundamental to our system of government; and

WHEREAS, the promise of equal justice under the law is not realized for individuals and families who have no meaningful access to the justice system because they are unable to pay for legal services; and

WHEREAS, this de facto denial of equal justice has an adverse impact on these individuals, families, and society as a whole, and works to erode public trust and confidence in our system of justice; and

WHEREAS, as a consequence of current economic conditions many individuals and families are experiencing critical civil legal problems they cannot afford to address; and

WHEREAS, Idaho’s lawyers and judges strongly support the provision of free-of-charge legal services to those can’t afford them and have joined together in a collaborative effort to support pro bono services through the establishment of the Idaho Pro Bono Commission; and

WHEREAS, in 2013, more than 750 public and private attorneys, working in association with the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, provided more than 15,000 hours of volunteer attorney assistance to more than 1,600 low-income individuals and family members, including the provision of legal representation in more than 600 state cases, while in 2013 volunteer lawyers provided 635 hours of pro bono service in federal court cases; and

WHEREAS, Idaho Legal Aid Services is a statewide non-profit law firm dedicated to serving the civil legal needs of low income Idahoans through its seven regional offices and in 2013 its staff attorneys and attorney volunteers provided 17,502.8 hours of free legal services to thousands of Idahoans with legal problems such as domestic violence, wrongful evictions, illegal foreclosure, guardianships for abused or neglected children, Medicaid and Social Security problems of seniors, and unlawful discrimination; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho Law Foundation is sponsoring a statewide campaign to fund legal services for low-income residents and persons with disabilities, with the funding to be shared among the Idaho Volunteer Lawyers Program, Idaho Legal Aid Services, and Disability Rights Idaho; and

WHEREAS, many Idaho lawyers, acting upon their volition, generously provide many untallied hours of pro bono service to the citizens of our State without receiving recognition for their unpaid services; and

WHEREAS, the graduating class of 2014 at the University of Idaho College of Law compiled approximately 9,330 hours of pro bono services, under the supervision of lawyers and judges, as part of the College’s distinctive pro bono program in which every student participates; and

WHEREAS, students and faculty at Concordia University School of Law contributed 1,003 hours of pro bono service in 2013, and are committed to expanding access to justice through their pro bono service requirement, their on-site legal clinic, and providing pro bono training for Idaho lawyers; and

WHEREAS, October 19-25 has been designated as National Pro Bono Week; and

WHEREAS, the Idaho Pro Bono Commission, consisting of the state courts of Idaho, the United States Courts for the District and Bankruptcy Courts for the District of Idaho, the Idaho State Bar, the Idaho Law Foundation, and the University of Idaho College of Law, and Concordia University School of Law, recognizes the need to expand the delivery of legal services to economically disadvantaged persons and families;

NOW, THEREFORE, the Idaho Pro Bono Commission and its constituent members recognize Pro Bono Week, October 19-25, 2014, as a time for Idaho, along with the rest of the Nation, to honor the work of those who provide volunteer legal services, to address the need for civil legal assistance on matters of profound urgency, and to remind all attorneys of their responsibility to assist in meeting the legal profession's sacred commitment to equal justice under the law.

DATED this 3rd day of September, 2014, by the IDAHO PRO BONO COMMISSION, and its constituent members: SUPREME COURT OF IDAHO, UNITED STATES DISTRICT AND BANKRUPTCY COURTS FOR THE DISTRICT OF IDAHO, IDAHO STATE BAR, IDAHO LAW FOUNDATION, UNIVERSITY OF IDAHO COLLEGE OF LAW, AND CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW.